

# CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR)

## Overview

The purpose of Cal-OAR is to establish a local, data-driven program management system that facilitates continuous improvement of county CalWORKs programs by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating outcomes and best practices. As required by Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 11523, Cal-OAR consists of three core components: performance indicators, a county CalWORKs self-assessment (CSA), and a CalWORKs system improvement plan (SIP). The Cal-OAR continuous quality improvement process (CSA and SIP) will take place over three-year cycles. Statute requires CDSS to develop a Cal-OAR workplan by July 1, 2019.

## Stakeholder Feedback and Engagement

CDSS established a stakeholder workgroup to develop the Cal-OAR work plan. The workgroup convened six times between September 2017 and October 2018 to provide recommendations on the Cal-OAR components. Workgroup members included stakeholders specified by statute, including current and former CalWORKs clients, advocates, county staff, legislative staff, as well as a variety of other subject matter experts.

Additionally, smaller working stakeholder groups met regularly to develop specific components of Cal-OAR, including the Performance Measures and Outcomes, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), and Data Collection and Automation. A Cal-OAR steering committee (comprised of legislative staff, county staff, advocates, and researchers) convened monthly to provide CDSS with recommendations on the project's direction. In addition to the workgroup processes, stakeholders were engaged, and input was solicited by CDSS through other forums, including the California Community College CalWORKs Association Institute, the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) Conference, and the CalWORKs 2.0 All-County Convening.

Parent Voices, a parent-led, parent-run grassroots organization, provided support to clients and input throughout the workgroup process. Current and former clients were engaged in all workgroup and small working stakeholder meetings. Clients were compensated with a stipend, child care payments, and transportation.

CDSS also engaged Mathematica Policy Research to provide technical assistance and research expertise in the development of performance measures and analytical tools.

## Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI): CSA, SIP, and Peer Review

The **CQI Instruction Manual** will provide instructions to CWDs on how to complete the CSA, SIP, and Peer Review. It will include specific data points and questions, some of which the county will be required to answer, and some that are included as a guide for analysis. The manual is currently in the development process.

## Key Implementation Dates

**Sept. 2017-Ongoing:** Cal-OAR stakeholder workgroups

**April 2019:** Release of performance measures and reporting requirements

**April-Aug. 2019:** Cal-OAR trainings

**June 2019:** Release of CQI county guidance (including CSA and SIP tools)

**July 2019:** Cal-OAR Implementation

**Dec. 2019:** Cal-OAR training series held at the CalWORKs Training Academy

**Jan.-March 2020:** Regional Cal-OAR trainings

**Fall/Winter 2020:** CSAs due CDSS

**Winter/Spring 2021:** SIPs due CDSS

**Spring 2022:** County Progress Reports due to CDSS

**CSA and SIP templates** will be used by counties to provide responses to the questions and prompts included in the Instruction manual. Counties will also be required to convene local stakeholders to provide input and recommendations in the CQI process. The county SIP will be approved in public session by the county's board of supervisors or, as applicable, chief elected official, and submitted to the CDSS.

**Customer Satisfaction:** Parent Voices is developing a client satisfaction tool, in consultation with current and former CalWORKs clients, that will be incorporated into the CSA process for ongoing client feedback. Mathematica Policy Research is assisting in survey design, development, and vetting.

**Peer Reviews:** Counties may include their requests for peer review in the development of the CSA; to develop improvement strategies in the SIP; or, to implement and assess SIP strategy(s). CDSS will aid in the matching process and provide counties with a tool kit and minimum requirements to meet. CDSS and stakeholders are exploring how technology and county groupings can be maximized in this effort.

## Performance Measures

The Cal-OAR Performance Measures were solicited from stakeholder feedback and refined through the workgroup process, including technical expertise from Mathematica Policy Research. The Performance Measures represent one component of Cal-OAR, intended to be analyzed within the larger Cal-OAR system (including specific questions and data elements included in the CSA). Statute requires Cal-OAR to include measures of participant engagement, participation, service delivery, educational attainment, employment, and program exits and reentries; and may include measures of family and child well-being.

Data will be reported to CDSS by counties, and obtained via data sharing agreements with state departments, including the Employment Development Department, California Department of Education, California Community College's Chancellors Office, and the California Department of Public Health. CDSS will calculate county performance measures, including information by specific populations (for example, welfare-to-work participants, exempt volunteers, etc.) and demographic variables (age, language, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity). Performance measures will be publicly available via the CDSS website.

## Cal-OAR Metrics (Performance Measures and CSA)

### Participant Engagement

- Engagement rate
- Sanction rate
- Sanction cure rate
- OCAT/Appraisal completion timeliness
- OCAT/Appraisal to next activity timeliness

### Service Delivery

- Child Care access
- Housing Assistance and Housing Support Program access
- Ancillary services access
- Transportation provision timeliness

### Educational Attainment

- Improved literacy, basic skills, English language acquisition
- Community College progress rate
- Educational completion

### Program Exits and Reentries

- Exits with earnings
- Program reentries
- Program reentries after exit with income

### Participation

- First activity attendance rate
- Orientation attendance rate
- Education and skills development access
- Education and skills development utilization

### Barrier Removal

- Mental Health services
- Substance Abuse services
- Domestic Abuse services
- OCAT data, utilization, and access

### Employment

- Employment rate of current CalWORKs clients
- Wage progression
- Post CalWORKs Employment rate
- Subsidized to Unsubsidized employment

### Family and Child Well-Being

- Home Visiting transitions to WTW engagement
- Family Stabilization transitions to WTW engagement
- Intergenerational CalWORKs enrollment

## Recommendations on financial incentives

The workgroup has two recommendations for financial incentives:

- **Innovation fund:** provide resources for counties to implement innovative strategies to improve performance on selected measure(s). Funding would be tied to specific measures and strategies outlined in the SIP.
- **Performance improvement funding:** provide funds for specified improvement on performance measures, or for meeting certain performance thresholds.

## Recommendations to reduce data reporting burden

CDSS recommends eliminating the Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE) individual level data reporting. The ESE reporting process is burdensome, and there are often reporting problems decreasing the data's usability; CDSS can get all needed information on subsidized employment through the Cal-OAR reporting structure.

After doing an assessment of current CalWORKs reports, uses and needs, there are no other reports CDSS recommends eliminating. A significant reporting burden reduction is not expected from removing portions of existing CalWORKs and Welfare-to-Work related reports.

## Analysis of associated workload (state and county)

The Cal-OAR requirements create added workload for county staff. County activities include: data entry (for variables not currently collected or required in the automated data systems), completion of the CSA, and completion of the SIP. The peer review process also generates additional workload; however, the existing budget includes funding for Peer Reviews.

CDSS is working with CWDA to estimate the projected Cal-OAR workload costs.